

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 INR-07 LAB-04
NSAE-00 SIL-01 DODE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02
/040 W

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FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7694
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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, ELAB, CE

SUBJ: ANOTHER LAKE HOUSE STRIKE

REF: COLOMBO 1916 (NOTAL)

1. A PORTION OF THE WORKERS AT LAKE HOUSE, THE GOVERNMENT-CONTROLLED NEWSPAPER CHAIN, WALKED OUT JULY 14 AFTERNOON IN PROTEST AT THE CONTINUING USE OF LAKE HOUSE PAPERS FOR GOVERNMENT ELECTION PROPAGANDA. THE STRIKERS DID NOT SUCCEED IN PREVENTING THE PAPERS FROM APPEARING THE FOLLOWING MORNING BUT THE STRIKE IS CONTINUING AND AFTERNOON JULY 15 PAPERS HAD NOT BEEN DISTRIBUTED BY 1600 LOCAL TIME.

2. THIS IS THE SECOND RECENT STRIKE BY UNP WORKERS AT LAKE HOUSE. AFTER THE LAST ONE, MAY 27, THE MANAGEMENT SUPPOSEDLY PROMISED TO GIVE EQUAL PROMINENCE TO SPEECHES OF BOTH MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES. A GESTURE WAS MADE IN THAT DIDETI
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BUT MUCH MORE ATTENTION IS STILL PAID TO THE PRIME MINISTER'S PRONOUNCEMENTS. THIS CONTINUING ATTITUDE THAT LAKE HOUSE IS THE P.M.'S PAPER AS WELL AS THE INCREASING UNP CONFIDENCE THAT
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THEY WILL FORM THE NEXT GOVERNMENT LED TO THIS WALKOUT IN WHICH UNP UNIONS WERE JOINED BY THE CEYLON MERCANTILE UNION, A CLERICAL UNION LED BY INDEPENDENT TROTSKYITE BALA TAMPOE.

3. THE PRIME MINISTER HAS SCORNFULLY REJECTED THE UNP SUGGESTION THAT SHE NEEDS THE LAKE HOUSE PUBLICATIONS TO ENSURE HER RE-ELECTION; SHE SAID RECENTLY THAT SHE WOULD CONSIDER

CLOSING LAKE HOUSE DOWN UNTIL AFTER THE ELECTION IF THE EMPLOYEE AGITATION AROSE AGAIN. SHE ALSO HINTED THAT THE SUN/DAVASA GROUP OF PAPERS, WHICH HAS BECOME INCREASINGLY PRO-UNP, MIGHT SOMEHOW BE PREVENTED FROM PUBLISHING DURING THE SAME PERIOD.

4. AS ELECTIONS NEAR, THE ALWAYS-POLITICIZED LAKE HOUSE ESTABLISHMENT IS GETTING INCREASINGLY JITTERY. THE GROUP'S HEADQUARTERS WAS ATTACKED BY REVENGE-SEEKING SLFP'ERS IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE 1970 ELECTION WHEN LAKE HOUSE SUPPORTED THE UNP. THIS YEAR, WITH THE SHOE ON THE OTHER FOOT, SPECIAL SECURITY FORCES ARE SAID TO BE DETAILED TO LAKE HOUSE FOR THE MORNING AFTER ELECTIONS. THIS LATEST STRIKE SEEMS TO INDICATE THAT THE LAKE HOUSE UNP'ERS, COWED FOR THE PAST FEW YEARS, ARE LEAVING NO DOUBT ABOUT THEIR EXPECTATIONS REGARDING THE ELCTION OUTCOME.
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